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Congress of the United States  
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March 30, 2023

Robert Santos  
Director  
U.S. Census Bureau  
4600 Silver Hill Road  
Washington, DC 20233

Dear Director Santos,

In response to this morning's Census Bureau announcement concerning population estimates, I'm writing to convey my ongoing concerns surrounding the repeated undercounting of the population of Illinois in the Census Bureau's official population estimates from the Population Estimates Program (PEP) and the 2020 Census, as assessed by the Post-Enumeration Survey (PES).<sup>1</sup> This latest release's claim that Illinois' Cook County lost 68,000 people last year appears to echo past PEP and Census data that drove misleading narratives and rhetoric surrounding purported population losses in Illinois which were subsequently revealed to be unfounded by the PES.<sup>2</sup>

In my letters last year and earlier this year, I requested information on the ACS and Census data which showed Illinois losing a significant portion of its population only for the May 2022 PES to conclude that 14 states had been undercounted or overcounted in the decennial Census, and that that Illinois was among them, as it was undercounted by hundreds of thousands of people. As I previously noted, those PES findings not only helped to dispel years of false narratives about Illinois' purported decline driven by Census Bureau products but also raised serious questions for Illinois officials as to the reliability of the Census Bureau's results more broadly. Beyond the implications such data have for our understanding of our state's population dynamics, Census Bureau data will be utilized over the next decade to allocate roughly \$1.5 trillion in federal funding through approximately 100 programs, including Medicaid, SNAP, Medicare, Highway Planning and Construction, and Pell grants.

In your June 16, 2022 response to my letters with colleagues on this matter, you stated, regarding incorporating PES findings into data products, that, "the Census Bureau has established a team of experts tasked with researching the feasibility of taking coverage measures from the Demographic Analysis and Post-Enumeration Survey into account in the development of the official population estimates." Further, in responding to the question of whether the Bureau would commit to utilizing the PES in deriving Population Estimates from the Decennial Census, you wrote, "While too early to commit to incorporating PES into the population estimates, the Census Bureau is researching the

<sup>1</sup>2019 ACS 5-Year Estimate Data Profile; <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2021/2021-population-estimates.html>

<sup>2</sup> Census Bureau Press Release, "Growth in the Nation's Largest Counties Rebounds in 2022", March 30, 2023

feasibility of taking coverage measures from both the Demographic Analysis and Post-Enumeration Survey into account in the development of the official population estimates.”<sup>3</sup>

In December 2022 and January 2023, I wrote additional letters to you, requesting clarification on the implementation of PES findings into population estimates, the schedule for doing so, and other Census Bureau efforts to prevent a repetition of the previous undercounting of Illinois. Further, I asked if coverage measures from the May 2022 Demographic Analysis and Post-Enumeration Survey results which showed Illinois’ population growth were accounted for in the December 2022 population estimates, when such measures would be incorporated if they had not yet been, and whether any other new efforts had been undertaken to address the consistent undercounting of Illinois.

In response, on February 2, 2023, I received a letter from your agency which noted that while your Base Evaluation and Research Team (BERT) has been established to “research the feasibility of taking coverage measures from 2020 DA, PES, and other sources into account in developing population estimates, that a specific timeline for such adjustments was not known and “will be necessarily dependent on the findings as they relate to coverages measures” and other factors.<sup>4</sup> Further, the response noted that “the soonest potential adjustments could be implemented into the estimates base would be for the Vintage 2023 estimates series, which is scheduled to be released on a rolling basis from December 2023 through June 2024.”

Considering the data released today and the information provided in your agency’s most recent letter, I request answers to these additional questions by April 13th:

1. If “the soonest potential adjustments could be implemented” into population estimate figures would be December 2023, as indicated in your agency’s previous letter, does that mean that current PEP methodology has not incorporated recent findings to address previous undercounts in PEP and 2020 Census figures revealed by the PES?<sup>5</sup>
2. What is the current anticipated timeline for “potential adjustments” of the April 1, 2020, estimates base from the BERT’s “findings as they relate to coverage measures (and other data sources), strategy of incorporation, and development that will need to occur?”<sup>6</sup>
3. As Census Bureau data will be utilized over the next decade to allocate roughly \$1.5 trillion in federal funding, how outside of the BERT initiative is your agency addressing undercounting issues which were revealed in May 2022 but, according to your staff, will not help to reshape population estimates until December 2023 at the earliest, 19 months after they were first published?<sup>7</sup>

Sincerely,



Raja Krishnamoorthi  
Member of Congress

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<sup>3</sup>[U.S. Census Bureau Director Santos Letter To Senator Durbin And The Illinois Congressional Delegation, June 16, 2022](#)

<sup>4</sup>[U.S. Census Bureau Letter To Congressman Krishnamoorthi, February 3, 2023](#)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid